SPORT

‘Nothing concrete’ in Rosenior Chelsea reports

PARIS: Strasbourg coach Liam Rosenior said on Saturday that there was “nothing concrete” about the reports linking him with the Chelsea job, after his team’s 1-1 draw at Nice in Ligue 1.

Enzo Maresca left his role in charge of the Blues on Thursday with Englishman Rosenior, who guided the Alsatian club to a seventh-placed finished last season, tipped to take over at Stamford Bridge.

The draw leaves Strasbourg, who are owned by Chelsea’s parent company BlueCo, seventh in the table without a league win since November 9.

“I want to focus on Strasbourg and not other things at the moment,” Rosenior told reporters. “That’s all the information I can give you today.

“We don’t know what will be done tomorrow, but at the moment, there’s nothing concrete,” the 41-year-old former England under-21 defender added.

On the Cote d’Azur, Argentina forward Joaquin Panichelli opened the scoring for Rosenior’s visitors with a penalty on 13 minutes.

New signing Elye Wahi claimed a point for the hosts barely 10 minutes after the break, having joined on loan from Eintracht Frankfurt on Thursday, in Claude Puel’s first game of his second stint at the helm.

Frenchman Puel replaced Franck Haise on the French Riviera on Monday with Nice struggling close to the relegation zone.

At the Allianz Riviera, Puel brought on 23-year-old Wahi at half-time and nine minutes later he drew the sides level.

Former Marseille forward Wahi had three chances to claim all three points but his best opportunity was stopped by Strasbourg goalkeeper Mike Penders.

Earlier, Czech Republic forward Pavel Sulc scored twice as Lyon beat Monaco 3-1 to maintain their hopes of European football next season.

Later, Rennes moved two points off Lille in the final Champions League qualifying spot winning by beating their hosts 2-0 thanks to second half efforts from right-back Przemyslaw Frankowski and winger Quentin Merlin.—AFP

Juventus held by lowly Lecce as David fluffs panenka

ROME: Canada’s Jonathan David had an 89th minute penalty saved on Saturday as Juventus missed the chance to put pressure on Serie A leaders AC Milan after a 1-1 draw with Lecce.

Luciano Spalletti’s resurgent Juve had to settle for a point after striker David’s spot-kick went horribly wrong.

Lecce goalkeeper Wladimiro Falcone read David’s chip down the middle and parried the ball to safety with an outstretched arm.

David’s error meant that the record 36-time Italian champions trail Milan by five points having played a game more.

But they moved up a place to fourth on goal difference after Giorgio Scalvini’s strike gave Atalanta a 1-0 victory over Roma, who dropped to fifth.

Lameck Banda put Lecce ahead on the stroke of half-time, firing into the top corner before Juve levelled through Weston McKennie shortly after the restart.

The hosts were on a run of three straight Serie A wins and seven wins in their last eight games in all competitions.

Milan won 1-0 at Cagliari on Friday but Inter Milan can leapfrog their city rivals with a win over Bologna on Sunday.—AFP

OGDCL tighten control over PTV

KARACHI: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) tightened their grip on defending champions Pakistan Television (PTV) by securing a 103-run first-innings lead on the second day of their President’s Trophy match here on Sunday.

At the UBL Sports Complex, Haroon Arshad struck his second successive first-class century to anchor OGDCL’s reply of 302 to PTV’s 199. Resuming at 73-1, OGDCL lost Israrullah for a brisk 53, but Haroon compiled a resolute 104 off 210 balls, sharing a crucial 138-run stand with Umar Siddiq (56). OGDCL later slumped from 218-2, losing eight wickets for 84 runs.

PTV’s Israr Hussain claimed 7-95, his third five-wicket-plus haul. In response, PTV reached 22 without loss at stumps, still 81 runs adrift.

At the NBP Sports Complex, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) surged ahead of Ghani Glass by 222 runs after finishing on 194-3 in their second innings.

Mohammad Ghazi Ghori remained unbeaten on 113, adding 143 for the fourth wicket with Rameez Aziz (47 not out). Earlier, Mohammad Abbas’ miserly 6-27 helped dismiss Ghani Glass for 174.

Khan Research Laboratories (KRL) were firmly placed against Sahir Associates at the National Bank Stadium. After Arshad Iqbal’s maiden five-for routed Sahir for 123, KRL set a target of 228 despite collapsing to 146. Sahir stumbled to 42-4 by close.

Meanwhile, Wapda took control against Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited. Khalid Usman’s 96 powered Wapda to 2a 129-run lead. —Sports Reporter

TANGIERS: Senegal’s Pape Gueye scores during the Africa Cup of Nations round-of-16 match against Sudan at the Grand Stadium.—AFP

Senegal march on to AFCON quarters as Mali beat Tunisia on penalties

CASABLANCA: Pape Gueye scored twice as much-fancied Senegal came from behind to beat Sudan 3-1 on Saturday and seal a place in the quarter-finals of the Africa Cup of Nations, while 10-man Mali edged Tunisia in a dramatic penalty shoot-out.

Champions in 2022, Senegal are seen as the biggest threat to hosts Morocco’s dreams of winning a first AFCON title in half a century.

It would have been a huge shock had the Lions of Teranga lost in Tangiers to a Sudan side almost 100 places beneath them in the FIFA rankings.

Sudan reached the Cup of Nations knockout stage for just the second time since lifting the trophy in 1970 despite the country being ravaged by civil war for almost the last three years.

However, an upset was on the cards when Aamir Abdallah, a semi-professional who plays for an Australian second-tier club in Melbourne, curled in a superb early opener.

Nevertheless Senegal, who took four points out of a possible six against Sudan during qualifying for the 2026 World Cup, came back to lead by half-time thanks to a brace by Villarreal’s Pape Gueye.

Former African player of the year Sadio Mane set up Gueye to equalise just before the half-hour mark and the same player struck again in stoppage time at the end of the opening period to make it 2-1.

Senegal introduced Ibrahim Mbaye with the game inside the final quarter and the Paris Saint-Germain teenager made sure of the victory in the 77th minute as he latched onto a long pass and beat goalkeeper Monged Abuzaid at his near post for 3-1.

Pape Thiaw’s team had already come from behind to draw with the Democratic Republic of Congo during the group stage and Gueye said the victory showcased their fighting spirit.

“We showed against Congo that we are capable of coming from behind in a game and that is what we did tonight, so we are very happy,” remarked the midfielder. “It means a lot. It shows how good the spirit in the camp is. It was a very difficult match. We played against Sudan before and they made life hard for us.

“But we managed to keep our focus and score when the chances came along.”

SHOOT-OUT DRAMA

They will now stay in Tangiers to face their West African neighbours Mali in the last eight next Friday after the Eagles prevailed 3-2 on penalties against Tunisia following a 1-1 draw at the end of 90 minutes and extra time.

Mali, who have never won the Cup of Nations, looked to be in trouble when full-back Woyo Coulibaly was sent off in the 26th minute at the Mohammed V Stadium in Casablanca for a nasty challenge on Hannibal Mejbri.

Tunisia then appeared to have won the tie when substitute Firas Chaouat headed them in front in the 88th minute, but Mali were rescued by Lassine Sinayoko’s 96th-minute penalty -- awarded following a handball -- which set up extra time.

With no further goals scored on a rainy night, the match went to penalties and Mali captain Yves Bissouma, the Tottenham Hotspur midfielder, blazed their first kick over the bar.

However, Ali Abdi then missed for Tunisia and Mali goalkeeper Djigui Diarra helped definitively swing the momentum his team’s way with saves to deny Elias Achouri and Mohamed Ali Bem Romdhane.

El Bilal Toure, the Besiktas forward who had failed to score a penalty in the same stadium in a draw against Zambia in the group stage, then stepped up to convert the kick that took Mali through to the next round.

“Before the game I said my team were already heroes and now there is no other word after we played for so long with 10 men,” said Mali coach Tom Saintfiet.

“Every player fought for their country and did everything to stay in this competition.”—AFP

Osaka wins after Raducanu pullout, Swiss make United Cup quarters

PERTH: Four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka got her 2026 season off to a winning start for Japan in the United Cup, after Great Britain’s Emma Raducanu pulled out of their singles clash with a foot injury.

But despite Osaka’s win, GB took the match 2-1 with a deciding mixed doubles victory in the Sunday clash.

Switzerland came through the deciding mixed doubles against Italy, with a 7-5, 4-6, 10-7 win by Belinda Bencic and Jakub Paul over Sara Errani and Andrea Vavassori, enough to see the team through.2-1 into the quarter-finals.

“There was great emotion from the team. We were into it with our hearts and it showed,” Bencic said.

Against Britain, Osaka was too strong for 276th-ranked reserve Katie Swan, winning 7-6 (7/4), 6-1 as Raducanu watched from the sidelines.

“I’m proud of how I fought,” Osaka said. “I’d never played here, it was tough.”

GB captain Tim Henman said Raducanu could appear later in the event.

Billy Harris, standing in for the injured Jack Draper, began with a 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 defeat of Shintaro Mochizuki. Great Britain sealed the match when Neal Skupski and Olivia Nicholls defeated Yasutaka Uchiyama and Nao Hibino 7-5, 4-6, 10-7.

Swiss veteran Stan Wawrinka, 40 and playing his final season, matched it with 23-year-old Italian Flavio Cobolli until a double-fault on match point proved to be the downfall of the three-time Grand Slam winner.

Wawrinka, playing his his second three-hour match in as many days, lost 6-4, 6-7 (2/7), 7-6 (7/4).

Bencic spoiled the 30th birthday of Jasmine Paolini 6-4, 6-3.

In Sydney, Alexander Zverev clinched victory for Germany against the Netherlands as the world number three demolished Tallon Griekspoor 7-5, 6-0.

Eva Lys beat Suzan Lamens 6-2, 6-2 and Germany also took the doubles for a 3-0 sweep.

Playing his first match of 2026, Zverev dropped just seven points in a commanding second set.

Canada beat China, with Victoria Mboko defeating Zhu Lin 2-6, 6-2, 6-0 and Felix Auger-Aliassime overcoming Zhang Zhizhen 6-4, 6-4.—AFP

Coach House Candy wins New Year Memorial Cup

By Aftab Gilani

LAHORE: Coach House Candy cemented her credentials on Sunday as a prominent three-year-old filly by winning the Makhdumzada Syed Hassan Mahmud New Year Memorial Cup during the first meeting of 2026 here at the Racecourse.

The four rivals of Coach House Candy could not match her pace. As she stormed to enter the straight, she collared them in the home stretch beating bay filly Inteha, while clocking one minute, 24 4/5 seconds in the 1,400-metre race.

Owned jointly by M/S M. Abubakar Attique Durrani, Amir Hussain Khan and Bhutta Racing Corporation, and trained by Rashid Latif, the winner was guided to victory by Awais Anjum.

Bay filly Qismat outpaced her rivals in the Metropolitan Fillies Trial Cup run over 1400 metres, clocking one minute, 25 seconds. She beat bay filly Ronaq who had built up a big lead earlier the race but failed to maintain it in home stretch.

Owned by Makhdum Syed Ahmad Mahmud and trained by Shahid Rehman, the winner was steered by Shahbaz Ali.

Rain forces no result in Pakistan, Zimbabwe U-19 tri-series game

HARARE: Persistent rain forced the U-19 tri-series match between Pakistan and Zimbabwe to be called off at the Old Hararians in Harare on Sunday, with both the sides sharing a point each.

After electing to bat first, Pakistan posted 208 all out in 46.3 overs before the weather intervened and no further play was possible.

Sameer Minhas top-scored with 48 off 58 balls, which included seven fours while Usman Khan contributed 41 off 53, hitting four fours and a six. The pair added 63 runs for the second wicket.

Ahmed Hussain (37) was the other contributor while Huzaifa Ahsan provided late impetus with 34 off 41 balls, smashing two fours and as many sixes. However, Pakistan lost wickets at regular intervals.

For the hosts, Panashe Mazai bagged four wickets for 32 runs in eight overs while Leeroy Chiwaula and Shelton Mazvitorera claimed two wickets apiece.

This was Pakistan U-19 team’s second match of the tournament to be abandoned due to rain, following the washout against Zimbabwe U-19 on Dec 29.

After the group fixtures, Pakistan topped the table with six points, winning both their matches against Afghanistan U-19. Hosts Zimbabwe finished second with five points from four fixtures while Afghanistan ended third with one point.

Pakistan and Zimbabwe now meet again in the final on Tuesday.

Scores in brief:

PAKISTAN 208 in 46.3 overs (Sameer Minhas 48, Usman Khan 41, Ahmed Hussain 37, Huzaifa Ahsan 34; Panashe Mazai 4-32, Leeroy Chiwaula 2-25, Shelton Mazvitorera 2-29).—Agencies

Ahmed, Aqeel advance at national ranking tennis

ISLAMABAD: Ahmed Nael defeated Shehryar Anees while veteran Aqeel Khan outplayed Ahtesham Humayun in straight sets in the men’s singles second round of the 11th Begum Kulsum Saifullah Khan National Ranking Tennis Championship here at the PTF Tennis Complex on Sunday.

Ahmed in a close match downed Shehryar 6-2, 4-6, 6-1 while top-ranked Aqeel simply outclassed Ahtesham 6-0, 6-4 to advance to the third round.

Muzammil Murtaza routed Zalan Khan 6-0, 6-2 and Mohammad Shoaib brushed aside Sami Zeb Khan 6-3, 6-2 in other prominent men’s singles clashes.

In the women’s singles quarter-finals, Soha Ali beat Shimza Naz Durab 6-3, 7-5; Sheeza Sajid overwhelmed Labika Durab 6-3, 6-2; Mahin Aftab Qureshi crushed Zunaisha Noor 6-1, 6-0 and Amna Ali Qayum ousted Meheq Khokhar 6-0, 6-4.

Matches of men’s doubles, U-18 and U-14 categories were also held on Sunday.

Results:

Men’s singles (second round): Muzammil Murtaza bt Zalan Khan 6-0, 6-2; Abubakar Talha bt Zohaib Afzal Malik 6-2, 6-2; Barkatullah bt Hamza Roman 6-3, 6-4; Yousuf Khalil bt Ahmad Chaudhry – walkover; Nadir Mirza bt Mohammad Haziq 6-3, 6-2; Ahmad Nael bt Shehryar Anees 6-2, 4-6, 6-1; Mohammad Shoaib bt Sami Zeb Khan 6-3, 6-2; Aqeel Khan bt Ahtesham Humayun 6-0, 6-4

Men’s doubles (quarter-finals): Barkatullah/Yousuf Khalil bt Aqeel Khan/Nadir Mirza 7-6(4), 2-6(10-4); Aisam-ul-Haq/Muzammil Murtaza bt Mohammad Haziq/Zohaib Afzal Malik 6-2, 6-1; Abubakar Talha/Ahmad Nael bt Yahya/Abdul Basit 6-0, 6-2; Mohammad Shoaib/Hamza Roman bt Ahtesham Humayun/Ahmed Babar 6-1, 6-1

Women’s singles (quarter-finals): Soha Ali bt Shimza Naz Durab 6-3, 7-5; Sheeza Sajid bt Labika Durab 6-3, 6-2; Mahin Aftab Qureshi bt Zunaisha Noor 6-1, 6-0; Amna Ali Qayum bt Meheq Khokhar 6-0, 6-4

Boys 18 & under (second round): Abdul Basit bt Ali Zain 6-1, 6-4; Hassan Usmani bt Jamal Shah 6-0, 6-1; Zohaib Afzal Malik bt Mohammad Rayan Khan 6-1, 7-5; Ahtesham Humayun bt Dawood Khan 6-0, 6-1; Mohammad Yahya bt Saqib Ali 6-3, 7-5; Hamza Roman bt Mohammad Muaz 6-1, 6-0; Abubakar Talha bt Zain Qamar 6-0, 6-0

Boys 14 & under (second round): Mohammad Junaid bt Moazzam Babar 4-0, 4-1; Meer Abbas bt Mohammad Shakib 5-4(1), 5-3; Mohammad Ayyan bt Raha Mohammad Taha 4-0, 4-0; Ohade Mustafa bt Mohammad Hashir Irfan 4-0, 4-0.—Sports Reporter

Late Olmo, Lewandowski goals give Barca 2-0 win at Espanyol

BARCELONA: Late goals from Dani Olmo and Robert Lewandowski earned LaLiga leaders Barcelona a hard-fought 2-0 victory over Espanyol in the Catalan derby on Saturday, with goalkeeper Joan Garcia playing a key role against his former club.

Barca extended their lead atop the Spanish standings with 49 points, seven clear of second-placed Real Madrid, who host Real Betis on Sunday. Espanyol remain fifth on 33.

In a physical and tightly contested match Espanyol came close to opening the scoring on several occasions but it was Barcelona who struck four minutes from time when Olmo produced a superb finish into the far corner after a pass from Fermin Lopez.

Lopez then surged down the right flank to set up Lewandowski in the 90th minute, providing his second assist of the night as Barcelona sealed the win and silenced a fervent RCDE Stadium.

“We know it was an important victory, in the derby, and what it means for the fans,” Lopez told Movistar. “Maybe we didn’t play our best game, but we knew how to take advantage of our opportunities.”

A gutsy Espanyol were the more threatening side for long stretches, pressing aggressively and carving out several clear chances, but they were repeatedly denied by Garcia, who was unfazed by the hostile reception from his former supporters.

The Barcelona goalkeeper produced a string of outstanding saves, denying Pere Milla with a point-blank header in the first half before stopping Roberto Fernandez twice in quick succession and stretching low to keep out a curling effort from Carlos Romero as the hosts piled on pressure.

“Joan is spectacular. We know he’s a great goalkeeper. It was a difficult game for him because of the pressure,” Fermin said of his teammate, who was named MVP. “He played a great game. We’re very happy that he’s a Barca player.”

Barcelona struggled to impose themselves for much of the contest, dominating possession without a cutting edge, but the match swung following changes from coach Hansi Flick, who introduced Lewandowski, Olmo and Lopez in the second half, substitutions that added energy and proved decisive.

“You have to help the team, whether you’re a starter or a substitute,” Lopez added. “I’m very happy to help and to get the three points.”

Before the breakthrough, Espanyol goalkeeper Marko Dmitrovic had kept his side level, pushing away a header from Jules Kounde before producing a point-blank save to deny Eric Garcia in a derby shaped by fine goalkeeping at both ends.

BARCELONA: Barcelona’s Robert Lewandowski (second R) scores during the La Liga match against Espanyol at RCDE Stadium.—AFP

Barcelona will look to carry their momentum into Wednesday’s Spanish Super Cup semi-final against Athletic Bilbao.

“We’re delighted to celebrate the New Year with a victory,” Olmo said. “We knew they were going to make things difficult for us. They played a great game, but so did we... Now we’re going for the Super Cup.”

Elsehwere, Villarreal maintained the pressure on La Liga’s giants with a 3-1 win at Elche on Saturday.

The Yellow Submarine moved provisionally third, trailing leaders Barcelona by eight points having played one fewer match.

Alberto Moleiro and Georges Mikautadze fired the visitors into a comfortable lead inside 13 minutes with clinical finishes.

Martim Neto pulled one back for Elche from the edge of the box, but Alfonso Pedraza wrapped up Villarreal’s win late on by slipping in behind and maintaining his composure to beat Inaki Pena.—AFP